

What is the Coconino County Search and Rescue Unit?

The Coconino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Unit is a volunteer arm of the Sheriff's Office involved in performing the Sheriff's statutorily mandated function of conducting or coordinating search and rescue operations within the county. Search and Rescue operations are supervised by a deputy assigned as the Search and Rescue Coordinator. The unit is trained to provide vital search and rescue services to the second largest county in the nation which encompasses approximately 18,600 square miles of diverse and sometimes very remote rugged terrain.

What kinds of things will I do while serving on Search and Rescue?

We are primarily a remote area or wilderness SAR team. Our services may also be used for law enforcement evidence searches, disaster response, missing person searches in urban areas, support at public events, and other activities. We are not trained in, and do not participate in the higher risk activities on the front lines of law enforcement.

Will I need special training for Search and Rescue?

To actively participate in the field on SAR missions you will be required to complete mandatory training in several key areas. We will provide you the training at no cost.

The basic SAR training includes:

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| 1. Introduction to SAR | 1 weeknight. |
| 2. Personal Safety | 1 weeknight. |
| 3. Map and Compass | 2 day weekend |
| 4. GPS | 1 weekend day. |
| 5. Tracking Fundamentals | 1 weekend day. |
| 6. ATV Training | 1 weekend day. |

These are the basic trainings. We also offer other trainings, some of which are advanced subjects in the basic training areas. Some may be mandatory for participation in certain SAR activities.

What are the other time requirements of Search and Rescue?

All volunteers are asked to serve 10 hours per month and 30 hours per quarter. This can be done a number of different ways including SAR mission time, training, maintenance of facilities and equipment, meetings, paper work, and more. Missions are very important so we look closely at time served on SAR missions. We feel that 10 hours per month is a reasonable time expectation for people with a serious interest in SAR.

How and when will I be notified of a SAR mission, and how long will it last?

You will be notified by pager and will use a call-in number to be given a brief synopsis of the mission. You will then indicate if you can respond. Missions can occur anytime 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It could be on a loved one's birthday, during a holiday gathering, or just as you crawl into bed. Missions often happen in bad weather. You have the option of not responding if that response would put unreasonable demands on you, your family, or your job. We ask that you respond as often as possible so we can maintain an effective team. Sometimes missions are completed in a few hours, but we sometimes have missions that last many hours, overnight, or several days. In the last example you might be asked to respond several times with appropriate rest periods in between.

We sometimes go a month or more with no mission activity and then there are times when missions may occur several days in a row or even at the same time. Missions often start in the late afternoon or early evening. Keep in mind our county is large and we may have to respond to a mission that is several hours and a couple of hundred miles away. This may require an overnight stay and more time commitment on your part. We try to restrict your operational time to 12 hours for safety, but this sometimes is not practical. Please have an honest discussion about the time demands of SAR with family, job supervisors, and others who could be impacted. If this is not a reasonable fit with your life style, we understand. SAR time demands are not for everyone.

What equipment will I need for SAR, and how much will I have to spend?

The expensive overall team items like SAR vehicles are purchased by the Sheriff's Office or Search and Rescue. You will need to have your own personal gear. This is basically your clothing and the items you carry in your search pack. If you are already involved in outdoor activities like hiking, backpacking, snow shoeing, or hunting you may already have most of the equipment you need for SAR and only need to add or modify a few items at little cost. However, if you are outfitting from scratch the cost can be considerable and should be carefully considered before committing to SAR. You don't need the most expensive brand name gear to outfit yourself properly, but your gear must be of reasonable quality to be functional and safe. If you are outfitting from scratch with reasonable quality gear you may spend \$1000 or more. We do require you to be dressed and outfitted correctly for your safety and the efficiency of the whole mission. Your pack should contain the basics for your comfort and safety for 24 hours unsupported in a wilderness situation. This would include protection from the weather extremes of heat, cold, and storms. You may opt to or be asked to use your personal vehicle in some SAR missions. This is optional.



What level of physical fitness do I need for SAR?

You will need good health and average or better fitness to participate safely and comfortably in SAR activities. If you are a fairly regular day hiker, backpacker, mountain biker, or have a regular exercise routine you are probably plenty fit for most SAR wilderness activities. SAR operations in the rugged canyon areas or at mountain altitudes require a higher level of fitness.

Keep in mind that during SAR activities you will often be required to carry a 24 hour pack which can weigh from 15 and 30 + lbs. depending on the season and the extra rescue gear you may be asked to carry. You may also be involved in lifting activities such as loading equipment or helping carry a heavy litter loaded with an injured person over a rugged terrain. An exercise program or recreational activity that mimics SAR missions (hiking, snow shoeing, scrambling with a pack, etc.) will be very helpful in keeping you fit for most SAR operations. Please make an honest evaluation of your fitness level and ability. Some training will require at least average fitness to take part in the field portion comfortably and safely. If you have questions on this subject or other health concerns, talk to your doctor and the SAR coordinator in more detail.

What if I am injured during a SAR mission?

Volunteers are covered through the Coconino County Worker's Compensation plan and may be covered by the State of Arizona's Worker's Compensation plan when on a mission. Please keep in mind we train many hours and do everything we can to reduce risks and make SAR activities as safe as possible, however we can not **guarantee** your absolute safety. SAR is an emergency service and can have some inherent risks. As you train and are made aware of the risks, please discuss these risks with your family and loved ones so as to determine whether or not you are willing to accept these risks as part of your participation in SAR.

Mental challenges

SAR can have some significant mental challenges. These can be long hours of tedious work in rugged isolated areas under difficult or unpleasant conditions. We will experience the misfortunes and grief of others which can be disturbing to some especially with repeated exposure. We may have to deal with body recoveries where significant trauma has occurred.

The county provides special counseling to deal with these issues and the stresses that can occur.

Rewards and recognition

Search and Rescue is one of a very limited number of volunteer activities where you will participate directly in saving lives. You may have a very direct, immediate, and significant impact on people's lives and their loved ones and families. It is very infrequent where you will find yourself in the media spotlight. SAR is mostly hard serious work rather than glamour and recognition. The rewards are mostly personal from serving your local and regional community and helping persons in need.



Coconino County Sheriff's Office
Bill Pribil – Sheriff
Sgt. Aaron Dick – SAR Coordinator

911 E. Sawmill Rd.
Flagstaff, AZ
86001
1 – 800 – 338 – 7888

In partnership with:



The Coconino County Sheriff's
Search and Rescue Flagstaff Unit, Inc.

The Coconino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Unit



Rescue of an injured hiker on the Mt. Elden Lookout Trail.

***Thank you for your
interest in the Coconino
County Sheriff's Search
and Rescue Unit...***

We hope this brochure will answer basic questions you might have about Search and Rescue (SAR) and guide you in determining whether SAR is the right volunteer activity for you.